A FUNERAL

SERMON

Occasioned by the

DEATH

Of the late REVEREND

Mr. *Christopher Taylor*,

WHO

Departed this Life *Octob.* 26.

PREACH'D *Nov.* 10. 1723.

By *JOSHUA BATES.*

LONDON:

Printed for John *and* Barham Clark, *at the* Bible *and* Crown, *and* J. Morley *at the* Cross-Keys, *in the* Poultry. 1723.

Price Six-Pence.

BRITISH
MUSEUM

TO THE

CONGREGATION

Lately under the paſtoral Care of the

Rev. Mr. *C. TAYLOR.*

THE following ſermon is publiſhed at your common requeſt, which I was the more willing to comply with, as it gives me an opportunity of acknowledging, in this publick manner, the many favours I have received from you, thro' the ſeveral years I have been imployed among you, and in particular that mark of reſpect which you have put upon me, in your ſo ſpeedy and unanimous choice of me, to ſucceed in the room of your late worthy paſtor.

I am ſenſible how unfit I am to fill up ſuch a ſtation; but as, I think, I may look upon your great unanimity in this affair as an indication of the divine pleaſure, as well as an argument of your real eſteem and affection, ſo from hence I am ready to promiſe

miſe my ſelf all needful aſſiſtance and encouragement in my future labours.

I hope I ſhall always maintain a juſt concern for your trueſt and higheſt intereſts, and ſhall endeavour, in a dependance on divine aids, to diſcharge the truſt committed to me in the beſt manner I am able; but in order to this, you will eaſily apprehend, I ſhall now, more than ever, ſtand in need of your remembrance at the throne of grace. I would, therefore, earneſtly beg you would ſtrive together in your prayers to God for me, *that I may be found faithful, and that my miniſtry among you, may be owned and ſucceeded.*

That you may ſtill preſerve the ſame peace and union among your ſelves which you have hitherto done; that the beſt of bleſſings may reſt upon your perſons and families; and that you may be filled with the knowledge of God's will, in all wiſdom and ſpiritual underſtanding; *and* may walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleaſing, being fruitful in every good work, and increaſing in the knowledge of God, *Is, and will be the earneſt prayer of,*

BRITISH MUSEUM

Your affectionate Friend,

And Servant in Chriſt,

JOSH. BATES.

2 Cor. v. 1.

For we know, that if our earthly houſe of this tabernacle were diſſolved, we have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

IT is a very awful and afflictive providence, which has brought ſo many of us together at this time. The allwiſe God has ſeen meet to deprive his church of a very uſeful miniſter, and this congregation of a very prudent and faithful paſtor. On ſuch an occaſion as this, we are not only allowed, but obliged to mourn; and to be unaffected would be altogether inexcuſable.

But ſince this is the will of God, our greateſt concern is to ſubmit to it, and endeavour a right improvement of it; and that we may be aſſiſted herein, I have choſen to fix your thoughts a little on the words I have now read.

They are evidently connected with the foregoing chapter. The Apoſtle is there acquainting us with the ſevere tryals, which he and others met with, on account of the work wherein they were imployed; and alſo with the ſupports, which, at the ſame time, they experienced and enjoyed under 'em. *They were troubled on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; they were perplexed, but not in deſpair; perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt down, but not deſtroyed; always bearing about in the body the dying of the Lord Jeſus* [a]. There were ſeveral things which contributed to this their ſupport in their work, and under their tryals. They were firmly perſuaded of the truth and excellence of the Goſpel, they were intruſted with, and of God's faithfulneſs to his promiſes; and this gave 'em boldneſs

[a] Verſes 8, 9, 10.

and

and courage in their work. *They believed, and therefore ſpake* [b]. They knew that the ſufferings they underwent, while they behaved aright under 'em, would redound to the glory of God, and the advantage of others: and if theſe ends might be ſecured, they were not much concerned about themſelves. *For all things*, ſays he, *are for your ſakes, that the abundant grace might, through the thankſgiving of many, redound to the glory of God* [c]. And they were alſo well aſſured, that theſe would iſſue in their own advantage, as well as that of others; that *their light afflictions, which were but for a moment, were working for 'em*, and preparing them for *a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory*. And *for this cauſe*, or upon theſe accounts, *they fainted not*; but *tho' the outward man periſhed, the inward man was renewed day by day* [d]. But that which was the chief means of their ſupport, and had the greateſt influence thereunto, was their eying an unſeen world. They knew *that the things which are ſeen*, whether the good or evil

[b] Verſe 13. [c] Verſe 15. [d] Verſes 16, 17.

things of this world, *are but temporal*; whereas on the other hand, *thoſe that are not ſeen are eternal* [e]; and therefore they looked off from the one, and fixed their eyes upon the other: and this both inſpired 'em with courage in their work, and bore 'em up above all the diſcouragements they met with in the courſe of it. And then follow the words of the text; wherein the Apoſtle goes on to acquaint us with the lively hope they had of this other and better world, whenever they ſhould have finiſhed their courſe here; and repreſents it as the great ground of their comfort, under all their preſent labours and ſufferings. They knew, indeed, that *the earthly houſe of their tabernacle* muſt, ſooner or later, *be diſſolved*; that death, in one way or other, would ſhortly put a period to their lives: but then they alſo knew, that there was a better ſtate and life reſerved for 'em; that *they had a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*. And the expectation of this, not only kept 'em from faint-

[e] Verſe 18.

ing

ing under their afflictions, but made 'em even to rejoice in 'em; and inſtead of dreading their approaching diſſolution, to be deſirous of it. And did we oftner look forward to the other world, and endeavour to keep up a lively exerciſe of that *faith, which is the ſubſtance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not ſeen,* we might hope to experience the like advantage from it; for what the Apoſtle here has recourſe to, as the ground of his comfort, is improvable by others as well as him; not only faithful miniſters, but ſincere chriſtians too. We are all of us ſubject to various tryals and afflictions here, and it is certain, that we muſt e're long dye out of the world, as others have done before us; but if we are now faithful in the ſervice of Chriſt, we may be aſſured, that *when our earthly houſe of this tabernacle comes to be diſſolved, we ſhall have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

In the words there ſeveral things to be obſerved, which, I hope, will not be improper for our preſent meditation. As

1. The

1. The account which the Apoſtle made, and which we alſo ought to make of the preſent life; which is, that it muſt ſhortly come to an end: *Our earthly houſe of this tabernacle muſt be diſſolved.* He here compares theſe bodies of ours to houſes or tabernacles, which are periſhing and movable things; and expreſſes his expectation, that in a little time they muſt fall of themſelves, or be taken down by others. The form of expreſſion in the text, does not import any doubt or uncertainty in his mind as to this matter; but ſhews that it was what he looked for, or took for granted, that by one means or other, the preſent life would ſhortly be brought to a period; that the union between body and ſoul would be broken, and theſe bodies, which now are as the habitations or tabernacles of our ſouls, being deſerted, would thereupon diſſolve and periſh. They are but earthly houſes, and therefore muſt neceſſarily decay; they are tabernacles or tents, and therefore may in a little while be taken down.

2. The proſpect which the Apoſtle had, and other good men have, as to another world.

world. *They have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* This preſent building muſt be deſtroyed, the earthly houſe of their tabernacle muſt be diſſolved; but then they have a better ſtate in hope and proſpect, where they ſhall not only be happy as to their ſouls in the full enjoyment of their God and Saviour; but even their bodies ſhall be built up again by the divine power, and made the everlaſting habitations of their perfected ſpirits. They are not only aſſured, that there are manſions of bliſs and glory prepared for 'em in the heavens; but alſo, that theſe bodies of theirs, which now are ſubject to diſſolution, and are oftentimes the ſeat of very afflictive pains and weakneſſes, ſhall be raiſed again, and become ſharers in the endleſs happineſs of the other world.

3. The firm perſuaſion which the Apoſtle had, and others may have, of this future happineſs. *We know*, ſays he, *that if our earthly houſe of this tabernacle be diſſolved, we have a building*, &c. He was fully aſſured, that there was ſuch a ſtate of happineſs, which God had prepared,

red, and deſigned, for all the faithful miniſters and ſervants of Chriſt; and in particular, that he was intituled to it, and ſhould certainly be poſſeſſed of it. And this is what others alſo are capable of attaining to. The ſcriptures furniſh us with ſufficient evidence of the truth and certainty of this future happineſs, and alſo acquaint us who they are for whom it is intended. So that if we can find we are of that number, we may depend upon it, that we ſhall not fail of the enjoyment of it.

4. The influence which this had upon him and others, and ſhould have upon us. What this was appears from the connection of the text with the foregoing chapter. It bore 'em up under all their difficulties. It kept 'em from fainting under all their diſcouragements. It enabled 'em with chearfulneſs to hold on in the way of their duty, thro' every hazard and danger. And this is the uſe, which we alſo ought to make of it.

All theſe are, I think, evidently obſervable in the text, I ſhall a little enlarge upon each of 'em, and then endeavour ſome improvement of the whole.

I. I begin with the account which the Apoſtle made, and which we ought to make of the preſent life; which is, That *the earthly houſe of this our tabernacle muſt be diſſolved.* You will eaſily diſcern, that the expreſſions, which the Apoſtle here makes uſe of, are metaphorical: and you have already heard, that it is our bodies, or the preſent life, which is ſignified by 'em. Now when he thus repreſents our preſent ſtate, there are two things which, I apprehend, we may clearly gather from it; both which are abundantly confirmed by conſtant experience, *viz.* That theſe bodies, or lives of ours, are of a decaying, periſhing nature, which muſt e're long of themſelves diſſolve and moulder away: and alſo, that they are many ways liable to be taken down and deſtroyed, before they come to fall of themſelves.

1. Theſe bodies, or lives of ours, are of a decaying, periſhing nature, which will e're long of themſelves diſſolve and moulder away. This is plainly intimated, when the Apoſtle compares 'em to *earthly houſes.* They are, indeed, houſes, but then they are but earthly houſes, *Houſes of clay,*

whoſe foundation is in the duſt [f], and therefore not likely to ſtand long. They are, in themſelves, very curious fabricks, which abundantly diſcover the wiſdom and power of the great Creator of 'em, and which give us very juſt occaſion to ſay, as *David* did, that we *are fearfully and wonderfully made* [g]. But ſince the entrance of ſin into the world, they are doomed to *return to the duſt* [h], out of which they were originally taken. The moſt beautiful of 'em cannot always retain their comelineſs, nor can the ſtrongeſt always preſerve their ſtrength and vigour; but both the one and the other muſt, in a little while, wither and decay. This is not the caſe of our ſouls. They have, indeed, a very near and intimate union with our bodies; but being of a different, that is, of a ſpiritual nature, they do not diſſolve and dye together with 'em, but when the *body returns to the earth as it was, the ſpirit returns to God that gave it* [i]. And hereafter the very bodies of ſaints ſhall be ſo far changed, as to be no longer liable to diſſolution.

[f] Job iv. 19. [g] Pſalm cxxxix. 14. [h] Gen. iii. 19.
[i] Eccl. xii. 7.

But

But in our preſent ſtate they are periſhing, and dying things, which, if they meet not with any ſhocks from without, yet will, of themſelves, wither and dye away. Tho' they ſhould not be broken and ſhattered by diſtempers, or thrown down by any external violence, yet in a few years they will fall of themſelves. But,

2. They are many ways liable to be taken down, before they come to fall and periſh of themſelves. This is implyed, when the Apoſtle compares 'em to tabernacles or tents, which are ſo framed, that they may eaſily be taken down, and removed upon any occaſion; and the truth of it is evident from daily experience. How few are there in compariſon, who are ſuffered to ſpend their days in eaſe and health, 'till nature comes to decay and wear out of it ſelf, and in whom the lamp of life is not extinguiſhed, 'till it goes out for want of oyl to ſupply it? Do we not ſee the far greateſt number of perſons, by one means or other, cutt off in the infancy or vigour of their days, and their tabernacles taken down, when, to outward appearance, they might have ſtood a great

while longer? How often has a violent pain, or diſtemper, in a few days, or hours, diſſolved the bands of nature; and brought a moſt healthful and vigorous life to a period? While we are walking up and down in this world, we are expoſed to innumerable accidents, any one of which may eaſily throw down theſe tabernacles: and ſuch is the very make and frame of our bodies, that if only a ſmall part of 'em be diſplaced, or out of order, it may ſoon iſſue in their diſſolution. So that we ſee the earthly houſes of our tabernacles are not only ſubject to decay, but continually tottering, and that as they muſt in a little while be diſſolved, ſo they may be overthrown before we are aware.

This is the common caſe of all, the very beſt of men are no more exempted from death than others. The Apoſtle is ſpeaking of himſelf and other faithful miniſters, when he ſays, the earthly houſe of their tabernacle muſt be diſſolved. Even the prophets themſelves do not live for ever; what is ſaid of the prieſts under the moſaick law, that *they were not ſuffered to continue by reaſon*

reaſon of death [k], is alſo true of the miniſters of the Goſpel now. It is a very great treaſure which is committed to 'em; but they themſelves, to whom this treaſure is committed, are but *earthen veſſels* [l], which may eaſily be broken. On which account, as it concerns 'em, while they are preaching to others, to ſpeak as dying men to dying men, ſo likewiſe thoſe that hear 'em to remember, that both they and their miniſters muſt ſhortly be diſſolved.

Thus I have conſidered the account, which the Apoſtle gives of the preſent ſtate of men, and particularly of good men, which is, that they muſt be diſſolved: and it would be a very uncomfortable one indeed, if they had nothing elſe in proſpect. But, bleſſed be God, they who are faithful in the ſervice of Chriſt here, are encouraged to expect a better ſtate and world, when they come to dye out of this. And this is what I am next to conſider, *viz.*

II. The proſpect which the Apoſtle had, and which other good men may have, as to another world; which is, That tho' the

[k] Heb. vii. 23. [l] Chap. iv. 7.

earthly

earthly houſe of their tabernacle muſt be diſſolved, they have *a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.* I ſhall not ſtay to make any remarks on the expreſſions which the Apoſtle here makes uſe of, to repreſent the priviledge and happineſs of chriſtians hereafter; but ſhall only endeavour to acquaint you with what I take to be intended by 'em. And, I think, they may be underſtood as ſignifying either more largely, that ſtate of glory and happineſs, which is reſerved for 'em in heaven; or as more particularly referring to the reſurrection of their bodies, and that glorious change which ſhall be made upon them at that time.

1. They may be underſtood as ſignifying more largely, that ſtate of glory and happineſs which is reſerved for 'em in heaven, which, as to their better part, *viz.* their ſouls, they ſhall be admitted to upon the diſſolution of the body, and which afterwards they ſhall for ever enjoy in their intire perſons. Our bleſſed Saviour has told us, that *in his Father's houſe there are many manſions,*

ſions [m], enough for the reception and entertainment of all his faithful diſciples, and that he is gone thither to prepare places for 'em. And it is poſſible that the Apoſtle might have reſpect to this, in the account which he here gives of the hope of chriſtians; for the expreſſions he makes uſe of, may fitly enough be applied to it. Thoſe manſions above are, *A building of God*, which he himſelf has prepared for 'em. They are *an houſe not made with hands*, but formed by his immediate power. And they are *eternal in the heavens*, ſuch as will abide for ever, and are not ſubject to change or decay, as the earthly houſe of our tabernacle is; and we have reaſon to believe, that when this is diſſolved, thoſe will be the portion and habitation of ſincere chriſtians, and that their happineſs is not wholly deferred 'till the reſurrection, tho' then it will receive very great improvements; but that their ſouls immediately, upon their ſeparation from their bodies, ſhall be admitted into a bliſsful and happy ſtate; and in particular, that they ſhall be with

[m] John xiv. 2.

Chriſt.

Chriſt. For this the Apoſtle expreſſes his firm expectation of in this very context, as well as elſewhere, when he diſcovers ſo great a deſire of being *abſent from the body*, that he might be *preſent with the Lord* [n]; and *to depart, that he might be with Chriſt* [o]. And if we underſtand the expreſſions in the text as referring to this, how happy a change is it which death makes in the ſtate of chriſtians? Then, together with their mortal bodies, they leave the body of ſin behind 'em, and are no longer annoyed and encumbred by it, as they were wont to be here. Then their ſouls are made perfect in holineſs, and wrought up to a thorough conformity to Chriſt, and meetneſs for the neareſt communion with him. Then they are admitted to the beſt ſociety, and the moſt deſirable imployment, where they are continually praiſing and adoring their Maker and Redeemer and Sanctifier, and are always happy in the higheſt diſplays of divine favour and love. Then they wholly ceaſe from their labours, their warfare is accompliſhed, they are advanced above

[n] Verſes 6, 8. [o] Phil. i. 23.

the

the reach of all their enemies, and enjoy a ſtate of unmixed and never ending felicity. But,

2. The Apoſtle may be underſtood as referring to the reſurrection of the body, and the glorious change which ſhall then be made upon it; and ſo that which he expreſſes his faith and hope of is, that tho' this earthly houſe of our tabernacle muſt be diſſolved, yet it ſhould not be wholly loſt; but in due time be raiſed up again by the divine power, and ſo far changed and refined, as to be every way ſuited to the heavenly ſtate, and made meet to be the everlaſting companion of the perfected ſpirit, in the work and joys of heaven. This is properly enough ſaid to be *a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens*; as it is the ſole effect of his almighty power, and deſigned to be an everlaſting inhabitant of the heavenly ſtate. And it would ſoon appear to be a very great and unſpeakable privilege, ſhould we ſuffer our thoughts to dwell a little on the change, which ſhall then be made upon the body, and the additional happineſs which ſaints ſhall then

enjoy. The change, which will be made upon the body at the reſurrection, is exceeding great; ſuch as far ſurpaſſes all our preſent conceptions, as appears from the accounts given of it in Scripture. The Apoſtle, ſpeaking concerning it, ſays, *It is ſown in corruption, it is raiſed in incorruption: It is ſown in diſhonour, it is raiſed in glory: It is ſown in weakneſs, it is raiſed in power: It is ſown a natural body, it is raiſed a ſpiritual body* [p]: and that *this corruptible muſt put on incorruption, and this mortal muſt put on immortality* [q]. And elſwhere he acquaints us, that our Lord Jeſus *will change our vile body, that it may be faſhioned like unto his glorious body* [r]. We cannot now fully underſtand the meaning of theſe expreſſions, but they ſufficiently repreſent the reſurrection, as a moſt grateful and deſirable proſpect: for, from thence, we may be ſure that theſe bodies will then be no longer the ſeats of pains and diſeaſes, as they now are; that they will no longer clog and hinder us in our religious exerciſes, as

[p] Cor. xv. 42, 43, 44. [q] Verſe 53. [r] Phil. iii. 21.

they

they now do; that they will no longer be the occaſions and inſtruments of ſin, as they have been; nor any more ſubject to diſſolution. And how great an addition muſt it be to the happineſs of ſaints, to have their bodies reſtored to 'em again with ſo much advantage; and then to be admitted into the train and retinue of their Redeemer, when he ſhall appear as the judge of all, to be openly acknowledged and acquitted by him, in the view of angels and men, and ſo to be for ever with the Lord, which we are aſſured will be the certain and immediate conſequents of it? Sure chriſtians have the greateſt reaſon, even now, to *comfort themſelves, and one another, with theſe words.*

Thus we ſee the happy proſpects, which faithful miniſters, and ſincere chriſtians have, as to the other world. I go on,

III. To conſider the firm perſuaſion which the Apoſtle had, and others may have of this future happineſs. We ſee he here ſpeaks of it with much aſſurance and confidence. *We know,* ſays he, *that if our earthly houſe,* &c. which ſhews, both that he was fully perſuaded of the certainty of

the certainty of the thing, that there was ſuch a ſtate of happineſs to be expected hereafter; and alſo, that he was aſſured of his own intereſt in it, and that he ſhould, in due time, be brought to the poſſeſſion of it. And both theſe are what others are capable of attaining to a well grounded aſſurance of.

1. They may be aſſured, that there is ſuch a ſtate of happineſs to be expected hereafter; where not only the ſouls of believers ſhall be made perfect in holineſs, and happy in the enjoyment of their God and Saviour; but their bodies alſo ſhall be raiſed out of their graves, and reunited to their perfected ſpirits, and for ever ſhare with 'em in the joys and bleſſedneſs of heaven. This, it s true, we are chiefly indebted to divine revelation for the knowledge of. It is from thence, principally, that we are fully aſſured of the certainty of it, and eſpecially, that we are acquainted with the nature and excellence of it; and it is only from thence that we are encouraged to expect the reſurrection of the body. But tho' this is the great foundation of our faith and hope as to this matter; yet it is of it

ſelf

ſelf ſufficiently ſtrong and ſolid, and enough to afford us an entire ſatisfaction. It would not be proper here, and, I hope, it is needleſs to go about to prove that the Scriptures are the word of God; and if we allow this, I think, we cannot be under any reaſonable doubt concerning it. Therein we find, that God has deſigned this happineſs for his people, before the foundation of the world. That the Son of God has come into the world, to purchaſe and procure it for us. And that the Holy Spirit is appointed and imployed to prepare us for it. Therein it is expreſsly promiſed as the gracious reward of all ſincere chriſtians, and is all along ſet before us as the great motive to a religious choice and courſe. And after all this, ſure we cannot be under any difficulty in our minds, as to the truth and certainty of it, without entertaining the moſt unworthy thoughts of the wiſdom and goodneſs and faithfulneſs of the great God. And that the bodies of Saints ſhall be raiſed again, in order to their perfect and conſummate happineſs, we have all the aſſurance that can be deſired, not only from many expreſs

Scrip-

Scriptures which declare it, but alſo from the reſurrection of our Lord Jeſus, which the Apoſtle at large improves as the moſt certain pledge and earneſt of ours [f]. And that anſwer, which our bleſſed Saviour gave the Sadducees, *Ye err, not knowing the Scriptures, nor the power of God* [t], is enough to ſolve every objection that can be raiſed againſt it.

2. They may alſo be aſſured of their own intereſt in this happineſs, ſo as to be able to ſay, in ſome meaſure, as the Apoſtle in the text, *We know that if our earthly houſe of this tabernacle be diſſolved, we have a building*, &c. For the Goſpel, which reveals this happineſs to us, at the ſame time deſcribes and characteriſes the perſons for whom it is prepared; if, therefore, we can find that theſe characters belong unto us, and that we are of the number of thoſe to whom it is promiſed; we may from thence conclude our title to it, and depend upon the future poſſeſſion of it: for the covenant and promiſe of God is a firm foundation of our hope

[f] 1 Cor. xv. [t] Matt. xxii. 29.

and

and truſt, and we may be aſſured that he will never ſuffer any thing, of what he has ſpoken, to be unfulfilled. I grant this is a matter that requires much pains and diligence but it is not unattainable; many ſerious chriſtians have enjoyed it, and more might do ſo, if they were not wanting to themſelves.

IV. Once more. We are briefly to conſider the influence, which the proſpect of this happineſs had upon the Apoſtle, and ſhould have upon others. It was his great ſupport under all the tryals of life, and it ought to be ours too. He *fainted not*, becauſe he *knew, that if the earthly houſe of this tabernacle was diſſolved, he had a building of God*, &c. and this ought to have the ſame effect upon us. Indeed, were it not for the proſpect that miniſters and chriſtians have as to another world, the difficulties they meet with here, would render the preſent life and ſtate very uncomfortable: but that is enough to make 'em not only patient, but joyful under all. The ſuitableneſs of it to this purpoſe will appear, if we only conſider two things among others.

1. How

1. How ſmall and inconſiderable their preſent ſorrows and ſufferings are, in compariſon of that happineſs which they are intitled too. Few, if any, ever met with greater tryals than the Apoſtle did; and yet, when he came to compare theſe with the glory he had in proſpect, he accounts 'em all but *light afflictions* [v]. And he elſewhere tells us, that *he reckoned that the ſufferings of this preſent time, were not worthy to be compared with the glory which ſhould be revealed in 'em* [w]. When we ſuffer our thoughts to pore upon our afflictions, they uſually lye with a very undue weight upon us, but did we oftner look forward to the other world, and by faith view the happineſs which is laid up for us there, this would alleviate our burdens, and make 'em much lighter and eaſier to us. Eſpecially when we alſo remember,

2. What a vaſt diſproportion there is between the duration of the one and the other. This the Apoſtle takes notice of in the formentioned place; when he came to compare his ſufferings and his happineſs,

[v] Chap. iv. 17. [w] Rom. viii. 18.

he

he obſerves that the former *were but for a moment*, in compariſon of the other which was *eternal*; and this bore up his ſpirits, and kept him from fainting under 'em. And And we might expect it would have the like effect upon us, did we oftner ſuffer our thoughts to dwell upon it. How long and tedious ſoever our afflictive exerciſes are, yet we may be ſure they will not laſt always; yea, that a little time will put a period to 'em. Tho' theſe earthly houſes, which we carry about us, may be long decaying, yet they muſt ſhortly be diſſolved, and then an utter end will be put to all our preſent groans and complaints. But that *building of God*, which he has given us the hope and proſpect of, will be *eternal in the heavens*. It is an *inheritance in corruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away*, which is reſerved in heaven for 'em; an happineſs which is pure and unmixed, which is ſubject to no decay or diminution, and which they will be under no fears of being deprived of for ever. And having ſuch a glorious hope as this ſet before 'em, ſure they have the greateſt reaſon to lift up their heads with joy,

under the ſevereſt exerciſes they may meet with here.

Thus I have gone over the ſeveral things obſerved in the text; and ſhall now conclude with ſome improvement of the whole.

1. Let us hence learn, to make a right judgment of our ſelves in our preſent ſtate; to look upon our ſelves as dying creatures, and our lives as very ſhort and uncertain things; that they are but earthly houſes and tottering tabernacles, wherein we now dwell, which in a few days, or years at moſt, muſt be diſſolved; and that, how ſtrongly ſoever they may ſeem to be built, they are in themſelves of a decaying nature, and liable every day to be thrown down by innumerable accidents. We are too apt to entertain very different thoughts of our ſelves, eſpecially when in a healthful and vigorous ſtate; at ſuch a time we are ready to ſay, that *the viſion is yet for many days* [x], and that we have a great deal of time ſtill before us; and hereupon to indulge our ſelves, in very undue regards to

[x] Ezekel xii. 27.

the

the preſent life, and groſs neglects of the other. But ſure *this our way* muſt be *our folly* [y], when it is ſo evident, both from Scripture and daily obſervation, that we cannot ſo much as *boaſt of to-morrow*, and that *we know not what a day may bring forth* [z]. Let us, therefore, endeavour to fix it upon our minds, that theſe earthly houſes of our tabernacles are diſſolving, that ſo we may not be too fond of 'em, and ſpend too much of our time and thoughts about 'em; but take care to imploy 'em in the faithful ſervice of God, that ſo we may be ready for their approaching diſſolution.

2. Let us adore the wiſdom and mercy of God, in making ſuch proviſion for the ſupport and comfort of his ſervants, under all their preſent tryals. Here they have much work to do, and many difficulties to encounter; they meet with a great deal of oppoſition, both from their own corruptions and the temptations of ſatan; they are expoſed to the reproach and contempt of the world, and ſometimes made

[y] Pſalm xlix 13. [z] Prov. xxvii. 1.

to feel the ſeverer effects of its hatred and malice: and they are alſo liable to many perſonal and family afflictions, to pains and diſtempers in their bodies, to diſappointments in their affairs, to the loſs of valuable and uſeful relations, *&c.* and they muſt expect, in a little while, to be themſelves ſeparated from all their preſent enjoyments, and that their tabernacles, which are now ſo often ſhaking, muſt ſhortly be taken down. But, bleſſed be God, the hope they have as to another world, is more than enough to bear 'em up under all their preſent afflictive exerciſes; for what reaſon can they have to faint, or be dejected, on the account of theſe *light afflictions which are but for a moment*, when they have the proſpect of ſuch an *exceeding and eternal weight of glory* before 'em?

3. Let us not think ſtrange at any of thoſe afflictions, which God ſees meet to exerciſe his ſervants with here, ſince he has provided ſuch a happineſs for 'em hereafter. Theſe are oftentimes very ſevere, and ſometimes of ſuch a nature as are peculiarly affecting; eſpecially when he ſuffers thoſe, that have been greatly uſeful, to fall under

under thoſe weakneſſes, or diſorders, which render 'em incapable of any further ſervice. But in this caſe, as we may be ſure that God is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works; ſo we have no reaſon to look upon it as any token of his anger and diſpleaſure, but what is very conſiſtent with his tendereſt love of 'em; ſince it has been the lot of the greateſt and wiſeſt and beſt of men, and is ſometimes no other, than the natural effect of a more than ordinary application to thought and buſineſs. And it is certain, that God may have very wiſe purpoſes to ſerve by ſuch a providence, and that it may be of great uſe to others; as, to ſhew 'em the frailty and uncertainty of the choiceſt enjoyments of life, and how much it concerns 'em to improve their reaſon and underſtanding while it is continued to 'em, *&c.* and in reference to themſelves, it is a kind of diſſolution of their tabernacles; and tho' hereby they are a little longer detained here, yet the greatneſs of that happineſs which is reſerved for 'em, will be an abundant compenſation for the delay of it.

4. Let

4. Let us endeavour to ſecure, and clear up our intereſt in this future happineſs, that ſo we may have the comfort of it, when we find the *earthly houſe of our tabernacle* diſſolving. This we muſt all of us ſhortly expect, and nothing can be a ſolid ſupport to us at ſuch a time, but this. Tho' we ſhould then be ſurrounded with never ſo many of the comforts and conveniencies of life, theſe, inſtead of making the thoughts of death more eaſy, would only render 'em the more afflictive to us, if we have no hope as to another world; and tho' our ſtate ſhould be ſafe, yet ordinarily our doubts and fears will be proportionable to our darkneſs and uncertainty about it. But if all be clear between God and us; if we can ſay, that *he has made with us an everlaſting covenant, ordered in all things and ſure*, this will enable us to welcome the thoughts of death, and with our Apoſtle, to be not only *willing*, but deſirous to *be abſent from the body, and preſent with the Lord.* Let us then make this our firſt and principal care, and apply to it with a becoming diligence, ſince we know not how ſoon our tabernacles

nacles may be taken down, or ſo far diſordered as to unfit us for ſuch a work as this,

5. Let the thoughts of this happineſs keep us from fainting under the loſs of our faithful miniſters, or chriſtian friends. That which ſupported 'em under the labours and tryals of this life is proper, not only to ſilence, but to comfort us under the affliction of being deprived of 'em. When we conſider their uſefulneſs to us, we have juſt occaſion to mourn; but when we conſider the happy change which is made in their ſtate, it ſhould, at leaſt, alleviate our ſorrow: eſpecially when we our ſelves are expecting ſhortly to follow 'em, and hoping to ſhare with 'em in the happineſs which they are now poſſeſſed of. It is a ſevere breach which God has made upon this congregation, by the death of your reverend and worthy paſtor Mr. *Chriſtopher Taylor*. Under his circumſtances death was a mercy to him; but the loſs of ſuch a one from among us, is a very juſt and great occaſion of our mourning and ſorrow; and it is the more ſo, as being accompanied with the loſs of ſome others,

to

to whoſe uſeful lives and labours God ſaw fit to put a period, much about the ſame time [a]. This, I doubt not, you will be ſenſible of, when I have only given you a general and imperfect view of him.

His natural capacities were great and extenſive, ſuch as would have rendered him eminent in any of the learned profeſſions, had he thought fit to have applied himſelf to 'em. But he choſe to devote himſelf to the work of the miniſtry, notwithſtanding the difficulties of the times, and the great diſcouragements he then had in view. And having fixed upon this as the buſineſs of his life, he ſet himſelf, with all proper care and diligence, to thoſe preparatory ſtudies which were needful to furniſh him for it.

He had a good opportunity for proſecuting theſe, in the place of his nativity, under the care and tuition of the Rev. Mr. *Matthew Warren* of *Taunton*, one who was eminently well furniſhed for ſuch a

[a] Mr. *Jeremiah Smith*, who died *Auguſt* the 20*th*. And Mr. *John Foxon*, who died but a few hours before Mr. *Taylor*.

pro-

province, and very ſucceſsful in the education of many perſons of note, both in the miniſtry and in other ſtations. And as I have often heard him ſay, with a peculiar pleaſure and ſatisfaction, he and the other ſtudents there at that time, received a very great additional advantage, from the free and improving converſation of the Rev. and learned Mr. *George Hammond*, who then reſided at *Taunton*, and took much delight in being often with 'em, and communicating to 'em out of his rich ſtore of uſeful knowledge; and who afterwards lived and dyed in this city. And by his great diligence and induſtry in purſuit of his ſtudies under ſuch advantages as theſe, he then made a very conſiderable progreſs both in rational and polite learning, which he afterwards further cultivated and improved.

He entred early on the work of preaching, not from any forwardneſs in his own temper, but at the deſire of thoſe, who were the moſt competent judges of his qualifications for it: and while he only preached occaſionally, was generally eſteemed as a perſon of diſtinguiſhed worth, and one who promiſed great uſefulneſs.

When he had been for ſome time thus employed, he was ſolemnly ordained to the work of the miniſttry, on the 25*th* of *Auguſt*, 1687. by ſeveral of the graver and elder miniſters, among whom his abovementioned Tutour was one; and not long after was pitched upon and recommended by a greater number of 'em, as moſt proper, both in reſpect of learning and prudence to fill up a very publick ſtation, *viz. the Bath*; where, tho' at his firſt coming he met with no little difficulty and oppoſition, yet by his ſolid preaching, and his wiſe and ingenious converſation, he ſoon obtained a general reſpect, and was afterwards had in great eſteem, not only by thoſe who attended on his miniſtry, but by many others in the publick eſtabliſhment.

From thence he was invited to *London*, to the ſervice of this congregation; where, for about twenty four years, he continued to diſcharge the paſtoral office among you, to your great ſatisfaction, and, I doubt not, ſpiritual profit too. For a good part of this time he laboured under ſome diſadvantage as to his voice, which rendred his ſpeaking

ing in publick more difficult to him than it was to many others; and yet, few were more conſtant in their miniſterial labours than he. And I will beg leave to add, as what I think is juſtly due to you, that ſcarce any miniſter in this city was more conſtantly attended on, or more valued and regarded by his people.

His great furniture for the work wherein he was imployed, appeared in all his publick performances. The main courſe of his preaching was upon the moſt practical and important truths of the Goſpel; ſuch as were moſt adapted to promote real and ſubſtantial religion; and his diſcourſes upon 'em were wiſely ſuited, both to inform the judgment, and to impreſs the heart. His ſermons were always delivered with great gravity and ſerioufneſs; and as far as his ſtrength and voice would permit, with vigour and affection too; as one deeply ſenſible of the weight of what he was about, and greatly concerned for the honour of God and good of ſouls. In prayer, particularly on more ſolemn occaſions, he was wont to be very copious and pertinent and ſerious. In expounding the Scriptures, (which

for a conſiderable time was a conſtant part of his publick work,) his chief aim was to make 'em plain and practical; he affected not to be critical; but when ever any difficulties occurred, he failed not to clear 'em as he went along. And when ever he was applied to by any, either under outward or inward troubles, as he had always a juſt and tender concern for 'em, ſo he very well knew how to ſuggeſt what was proper, both for their direction and comfort.

His miniſterial labours were chiefly ſpent among you, but his uſefulneſs was much more extenſive. He had a hearty concern for the common welfare of proteſtant diſſenters, among whom, upon mature deliberation, and full ſatisfaction in his own mind, he had choſen to take his lot. And well knowing how much the ſtrength of any cauſe depends upon the union of thoſe that are engaged in it, it was always his principal care and ſtudy to promote harmony and agreement among 'em. He was generally conſulted in their affairs, and never wanting to do the beſt ſervices he was capable of to their intereſts. And many par-

particular perſons, both miniſters and others, who had occaſion to apply to him, are able to atteſt how ready he was to adviſe, and aſſiſt, and relieve 'em.

He was one who had a quick apprehenſion, a ſound judgment, and a good taſte of things. He was wiſe in counſel, and had a conſiderable inſight into the affairs of the world. He had a large ſhare of natural firmneſs and courage, a ſteady honeſty and integrity, and a true greatneſs and generoſity of mind. Thro' his whole life he was very zealous for the civil and religious liberties of mankind, a hearty lover of his native country, and one who well underſtood the true intereſts of it. This his known character induced ſome of the beſt judges of men, to fix their eyes upon him, as a proper perſon to be imployed in an affair of great conſequence to both parts of the now united kingdom: and tho' he affected not to appear in ſuch publick tranſactions, yet being made to apprehend that he might do ſervice therein, he readily undertook it, and prudently performed it: and what were his views in that affair, and his hopes from the happy iſſue of it, may beſt be ſeen by the

the thankſgiving ſermon he publiſhed, when it was compleated [b]. That, and another ſermon, occaſioned by the death of Mr. *John Hind*, (who had long attended on his miniſtry, and was a great ornament to religion) are all I know he ever printed. Many other of his diſcourſes would have very well deſerved to have ſeen the light; but he could not be prevailed upon to give way to it; ſo that he publiſhed little, but what he did was judicious and correct. In converſation he was pleaſant and inſtructing, and upon proper occaſions wiſely ſerious, without vanity or affectation. In a word, he was a deſirable friend, and a valuable relative; an affectionate husband, and a kind and tender father; and in every capacity behaved in ſuch a manner, as to render his death a common loſs.

It pleaſed the allwiſe God, the great diſpoſer of life, that for a conſiderable time he outlived his uſefulneſs. He continued in his work, as long as he had ſtrength and capacity for it; and when his weakneſs had confined him to his own houſe, his

[b] Thankſgiving ſermon for the union, on *May* the 1*ſt*, 1707.

greateſt

greateſt affliction, and that which he moſt complained of was, that he could be no longer uſeful. The laſt act of his publick miniſtry among you was the adminiſtration of the Lord's ſupper; and, I hope, we ſhall not eaſily forget with what affection and concern of mind, he performed that ſervice. The *earthly houſe of his tabernacle*, which was long decaying, *is now diſſolved*. We have committed his body to the grave; and your great and juſt regard for him has followed him thither, and been expreſſed at his death, as well as in his life. All that further reſpect, which we are now capable of ſhewing to him, and which will afford us the greateſt comfort in the review, is to live that Goſpel which he preached to us. This I would beg leave to recommend both to you, who have long enjoyed the benefit of his miniſtry, and in particular to his ſurviving relatives. We muſt now no more ſee his face, or hear his voice in this world. We muſt now no longer enjoy the advantage of his counſels and inſtructions, his care and conduct. We ſee in the inſtance before us, *That all fleſh is as graſs, and all the glory of man as*

the

the flower of graſs. That the graſs withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the *word of the Lord endureth for ever*[c]. This is the ſame it ever was; and if we are careful to govern our ſelves by this perfect rule of our faith and life, we may depend upon that preſence of God with us, which can more than ſupply the want of every outward comfort. Let us, therefore, take care to keep cloſe to this, and to be *followers of them, who, thro' faith and patience are* now *inheriting the promiſes*, and we may be ſure that when *our earthly houſe of this tabernacle comes to be diſſolved, we alſo ſhall have a building of God, an houſe not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.*

[c] 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.

BRITISH MUSEUM

FINIS.